A STUDY OF MYTHS OF THE GALO

*The myth comes into play when rite, ceremony, or a social or moral rule demands justification, warrant of antiquity, reality, and sanctity.*

(Malinowski, 1926: 107) ¹

*Galo* tribe has rich treasure of myths but its richness depends on its continuity which again depends on the functions these myths play in the lives of the *Galo* people. But some of these myths and its emergent practices are found to have changed in the present generation with the change of its functions in the *Galo* society. Therefore, as already mentioned in the background to the study, the researcher intends to focus his study on only those myths, practices and rituals which are available, relevant and continue in the present time. The four myths namely myth of origin of universe and human, myth relating to marriage, myth of origin of *Mopin* and death are significant as it embodies the life cycle myths of the *Galo* people. Moreover, several practices and beliefs of the *Galo* emanate from these myths and become the unique identities of the *Galo* as a tribe.

Myths serve many different functions in the *Galo* world, but all myths do not serve all types of functions. For example, some myths serve just one function. It is also more expedient to look at the multiple roles that myth plays in all cultures and societies to see if the *Galo* myths fit this pattern instead of looking at each individual myth and trying to deduce its importance to society. It is found that there are six
fundamental functions that Galo mythology can serve like the mythology of any other culture.

The most important function of myths existing in the world is the explanation of facts, whether natural or cultural. Similarly, the Galo myths may also be taken as a kind of explanation of facts in Galo society; myth explains what the fact is about? It can be used to relate actual happenings from a time beyond memory. The example in this context may be made of genealogical history of each clans of Galo tribe beginning from Abo Tani as the first ancestor. Galo myths explain different socio-cultural practices and rituals such as origin of agricultural practices, Mopin festival, origin of death etc. Obviously, a myth functions as an explanation, but its narrative form distinguishes it from a straightforward answer to an intellectual question about causes. The explanatory function and the narrative form go together, since the imaginative power of the myth lends credibility to the explanation and crystallizes it into a memorable and enduring form.

Many myths explain rituals and customs. Ritual sacrifices are typical of traditional peasant cultures. In most cases such customs are related to mythical events. The Galo myths also explain and justify ritual sacrifices, like myths relating to the celebration of Mopin festivals etc.

Creation myths play a significant role in healing the sick; they are recited (e.g., among the Navajo Indians of North America) when an individual's world – that is to say, his life is in jeopardy. Thus, healing through recitation of a cosmogony is one
example of the use of myth as a magical incantation. The Galo priest also invokes Donyi-Polo through recitation of creation myth while performing ritual to heal the sick.

In Galo society, myth serves to teach the people of the societal norms and expectations as well as consequences of actions. For example, in the one version of myth of death, Abo Tani disobeyed Ane Donyi’s (mother sun) messages and consequently death came to exist. Myth functions to legitimize a claim to land, right to rule or to give importance to a city; these are sometimes called as founding myths. An example pertaining to Galo myth in this context is the claim of ownership of land between Tani and Yapom-Yaji. Myths also answer the question, “Where do we come from?” The myth of origin of universe and human of the Galo gives the answer to this question and it is not as complex and confusing as the Greek and other myths are.

A. Myth of origin of Universe and myth of origin of Human

In fact, human endeavours to account for his/her existence and the world in which he/she lives are the most deeply interesting manifestations of human mental activity and progress.

Myth of origin of Universe

The Galo myth of origin of universe is partly cosmogony myth and partly a creation myth. The term ‘cosmogony’ is derived from two Greek words ‘cosmos’ which
mean ‘world’ and ‘gignesthai’ which means ‘to be born’ and the literal meaning of these two words is ‘world-birth’. It is a cosmogony myth because universe formed itself as there was nothing in the universe millions and millions of years ago, there was pin drop silence around a big vacuum. Then, slowly and gradually, the cloud and fog formed in the atmosphere. From the union of cloud and fog, Hichi/Hisí (the earth) and Medo (the sky) formed. Again, out of the union of the earth and the sky and from their womb, the Jimi Ane (mother creator) was born. It is also a creation myth because it was Jimi who had created all – sun, moon, stars, all living beings, plants etc. and remains silent thereafter.

In this context, the role of nyibo (priest) and nyikok (eminent orators) who possess knowledge and wisdom not only of adoration but also of the traditional rules and customs of Galo society are important because only they can recite the origin of universe, all beings and things etc. Nyibo while performing certain rites like ngiyi-tonam, uyu-gupak etc. recites hymns and the sequence of events of the beginning of the universe and creation of all beings and things of earth to convince the spirits or deities that natural and supernatural beings originated from the same source of the universe.

Datta, Badu and Ette (1999) have paraphrased a few hymns recited by nyibo pertaining to creation of universe in the following ways.10
In the very beginning there was nothing, no shape or form. There was no soil, sky, sun-moon, spirit, human, animals, insects, worms and plants and trees.

In the atmosphere there was full of *Pambu* (white cloud) *Pamba* (fog). When looks towards the northern part and the southern part was visible only the white cloud and fog was spread over the space of the atmosphere.

Out of the union of the *Pambu* and *Pamba* (cloud and fog) and from the *kine* (navel womb) of the cloud and fog the *Hichi* (the earth) was born.

The shape and size of *Hichi* was like a *tarpi* (a jungle fruit like papaya) and then *Medo* (sky) was born which was like an egg in shape and size.

The head of the *Hichi* and the *Medo* were same in size and shape when they appeared. The chest and the body of *Hichi* and *Medo* were same. Buttock portion of *Hichi* and *Medo* were also similar in shape and size.

When look into the inner part of the *Hichi* and the *Medo* a light emerged out like firefly from the darkness and boundary of the earth and the sky.

Out of the union of the earth and the sky and from their womb *Jimi Ane* (mother creator) was born.
Jimi tuktem-me, garo-gari-be tuktem gari be Jimi chakpe Hikpo-gari-be, chakpe gari-be - Jimi’s head was like the head of the hornbill. The Jimi’s lower jaw was like the lower jaw of the Hikpo (male hornbill).

Jimi morok-ge Dumbe gari morok-gari, Jimi hepo hopen gari, hepo gari, Jimi nyable Bega gari, nyab be gari. - Jimi’s forehead was like the forehead of Dumbo (male deer). The spinal cord of Jimi was like the nose of the monkey.

Jimi dumpe-re Tango-gari, dumper gari to. - The hair/hair cutting of Jimi was like the young birds/chicken.

Hichi kangkur, Medo kangkur do Hichi gambe-ge Gambe-gemi Gambe jukchum-me, Medo gambe-ge gambe jukchum-me ‘Opo Tako’ be nedi tulen to. - The Hichi and the Medo have been created. And again out of their union ‘Opo Tako’ a very handsome young man was born.

Opo Tako Hichi giku, Medo giku-ge Jimi Ane-ne, Jimi giru, mambu giru nento. - Opo Tako a very handsome young man the son of the Hichi and Medo secretly had intercourse with Jimi Ane without her knowledge and consent.

Jimi Ane Jimi kipe rende nento. Jimi ngidum-me babi nento. - Now Jimi Ane felt surprised that she is carrying a child in her womb. Then her breast also started to develop and enlarged very fast.

Jimi Apie pi repnamme, Nyite, Kate, Si, Mugli, Biro, Digi, Pote-Cikom-ne Jimi ape-be pilento. - After a month together Jimi started giving birth. The offspring were Nyite (the oldest son), Mugli (the spirit of woman), Cikom (a spirit of hunters), and the Digi (owner of land).

Ok tayalo Tani-Taki em, Hote-Honyo, Tapum, Taruk, Asi-Amen, Nesik-nemi, naru-em nedi tulen to. - Thereafter the Jimi-Ane gave birth the Tani (the man), Taki (evil spirit), Hote-Honyo (elephant and tiger), the Tapum (worms), Taruk (the insects and ants), Asi-Amen (the birds and animals) and Nesik-Nemi (plants and trees) etc.

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Then again Jimi-Ane gave birth to ‘Diko’ (the winter season) and ‘Dibor’ (the summer season). The first plant which Jimi-Ane gave birth were ‘Sikeneme’ and ‘Kormatane’ (a thorny plant) and the tree which come out first from her body were the ‘Ditak Simi’ and Nyido-Lobo etc.

Sonyo abi-be Aonyo-Tumro-ne Sotum abi-de sotum Pirine Sore abi-ne Tapi-rabuk-ne Sodium abi-ne Sodium Ponyo Tapum abi-ne Nyido-keso Tarku abi-ne Cisup-denyup-ne nedi tulem to.

After that Jimi-Ane created many wild animals and they were mainly Sonyo-Tumro (the tiger), Sotum-piri (the first bear), Tapi-Rabuk (the first pig), the Sodium-Ponyo (the first deer), Nyido-keso (the first insect) and the Cisup-denyup (the first ant) etc.

Jimi abi nem Jimi nedi-em tulen kanamme-Nyite, Kate, Si, Mugli, Biro, Pote, Digi, Dibo-Kombo, Tani, Taki, Aci-Amen Jede-ko kamato.

After giving birth all living beings like Nyite (a powerful spirit of wild animals), Si (oldest son of Jimi), Mugli (spirit of earthquake and volcano), Biro (spirit of water), Digi (the spirit of land, hill and mountain), Dibo-Kombo (God of archery), Tani (the first man), Taki (evil spirit) and Asi-Amen (birds and animals) there was not much space and land for their living and existence.

Hichi kinik-ke ri-ekto Medo kinik-ke riek to. Hichi giri-e goro jima; Medo giri-e goro jima.

The gap and space between the Hichi and the Medo were very limited and congested for the existence of Tani, Taki, many gods and goddesses and other animals. The area and territory of the earth and the sky were not expanded.


Then, Jimi-Ane created ‘Mipu’ (a very young full woman). She advised and told Mipu that my dear Mipu space and the territory between the earth and the sky were congested and very limited for the existence of ‘Kabo-Rabo’ (all offspring of Jim-Ane).

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Now Jimi-Ane ordered her daughter Mipu to make many expeditions for the expansion of the territory. Then Mipu started her first expedition and occupied a vast area of land by expanding the territory and gap between the earth and the sky.

Now again started her second expedition by flying towards Cinyo (the south pole) and covered the land for Liku (the god of war), Ngurku (the evil spirit of rat and mouse). Puru and Rapru (the spirit of headache).

In the third expedition she covered the land of Ciko (the meeting place for all spirits) for Kate (a powerful spirit of wild animals), for Jiku Jite and Jiru (all benevolent spirit of the underworld).

In the fourth expedition Mipu flew towards Dimir-Mirma (name of place) and covered the land for Pinku and Pinte (the god and goddess of Mopin festival and agriculture).

In the fifth expedition, she flew towards Cibu (name of a place where evil spirits gathers) and covered that land for Liku and Ngurku (the spirit of rat and mouse). After that she occupied Cia for Jirnu-Jirba (who calls back the soul of a person).

During the sixth expedition she covered the Loku-Lote (central place) area for Pinku and Pinte (the god and goddess of Mopin). And then Mipu flew towards Dorum (an oldest place) and owned this place for Pirku-Pirte (the god of north pole and god of agriculture) and Jabo-Rabo (one of the gods of Mopin).
Lastly, Mipu had occupied Dori-Doji area for Kate (a powerful spirit of wild animal), and for Karo, Gene, Yirku, Yirte (all are name of spirit), the Donyi and Kate (an evil spirit who kidnap the young boys). And at last, covered Giku (an unfertile land) for Mima-Maru (the evil spirit).

After that Hichi and Medo began to sacrifice the Citu hobo and dotu hobo for a feast. And especially, the neck portion of the mithun was cooked and eaten by them. After the feast the Hichi and Medo were separated from each other.

As the neck portion of the mithun meat was eaten by Hichi and Medo and after the feast Hichi was advised by Medo to observe a taboo for a few days but Hichi did not pay any heed to it. As a result by curse so many creeper plants, thorny trees and many other things were breeding up over the Hichi’s body.

Medo was sincere enough and he observed the taboo and as a blessing the sky was very bright and clear. So, in this way many living beings were created and emerged in this universe.

According to this hymn, in the very beginning there was nothing in the universe. It was a formless and shapeless existence; bereft of sun, moon, spirits or any other animate and inanimate things. Nothing was visible in the space of the atmosphere except Pambu (cloud) and Pamba (fog). Slowly, out of the union of Pambu and Pamba and from their womb, both Hichi/Hisit (earth) and Medo (sky) were born. The form of Hichi was like a papaya and that of Medo an egg. The head, chest and
buttock of both Hichi and the Medo were identical in size and shape when they appeared. Thereafter, again out of the union of the earth and the sky, Jimi popularly known as Jimi Ane (mother creator) was born. Jimi’s head was like the head of a hornbill. Her lower jaw was like the lower jaw of the male hornbill, forehead was like the forehead of a male deer, her spinal cord was like the nose of a monkey and her hair was like that of a young bird or chick.

Again after sometime, opo tako a very handsome young man was born out of the union of Hichi and the Medo. Opo tako secretly had an intercourse with Jimi Ane. Jimi Ane felt surprised to conceive a child in her womb. Her breast started to develop and enlarged very fast. After some months, Jimi started to give birth. Her children were nyite (the eldest son), Mugli (the spirit of woman), Cikom (a spirit of hunters) and Digi (the owner of land). Subsequently, Jimi Ane gave birth to Tani (the man), Taki (evil spirit), Hote (elephant), Honyo (tiger), Tapum (worms), Taruk (the insects and ants), Asi-Amen (the birds and animals) and Nesin-Nemi (plants and trees) etc. Then again Jimi Ane gave birth to ‘Diko’ (winter season) and ‘Dibor’ (summer season), ‘Sikeneme’ and ‘Kormatane’ (plants), and ‘Ditak Simi’ and Nyidolobo (trees) etc. In this way, Jimi Ane gave birth to all living things but a problem arose as there was not much space and land for their survival. Moreover, the territory of the earth and the sky was not expanded which made the gap or space between them very limited. Thus, the space for Tani, Taki, spirits and animals was also very congested and overcrowded.
In view of that precarious situation, Jimi Ane created Mipu (a young woman) and ordered her to make expeditions for the expansion of the congested territory. Mipu started her first expedition and occupied a vast area of land by expanding the territory and gap between the earth and the sky. She made her second expedition by flying towards Cinyo (South Pole) and covered the land for Liku (the god of war), Ngurku (the evil spirit of rat) and Puru and Rapru (the spirits of headache). In the third expedition, she covered the land of Ciko (the meeting place of all spirits) for Kate (a powerful spirit of wild animals), for Jiku Jite and Jiru (all benevolent spirits of the underworld). In the fourth expedition, Mipu flew towards Dimir-Mirma (name of place) and covered the land for Pinku and Pinte (daughters of Ane Mopin). In the fifth expedition, she flew towards Cibu (name of a place where evil spirits gather) and occupied that land for Liku and Ngurku. After that she occupied Cia for Jirnu-Jirba (one who call back the soul of a person). During the sixth expedition, she covered the Loku-Lote (central place) area for Pinku and Pinte. And then she flew towards Dorum (an oldest place) and owned this place for Pirku-Pirte (the god of North Pole and agriculture) and Jabo-Rabo (one of the gods of Mopin’s world). Lastly, Mipu occupied Dori-Doji area for Kate and for Karo, Gene, Yirku, Yirte (names of spirits) and the Donyi. And she also occupied Giku (an unfertile land) for Mima-Maru (the evil spirit).

With the accomplishment of the expedition by Mipu, Hichi and Medo sacrificed hob (bos frontalis) for a feast. The neck portion of the mithun was deliciously cooked and eaten by Hichi and Medo. After that feast both Hichi and Medo were separated from each other. Medo advised Hichi to observe a taboo for a few days as he had
eaten the meat from the neck of the mithun but *Hichi* ignored it. As a result of her disobedience to the taboo, he was cursed with so many creeper plants, thorny trees and many other things over his whole body. Conversely, *Medo* was sincere enough and observed the taboo very cautiously. Hence being blessed, the sky became very bright and clear. In this manner, all living and non-living things of this universe were created by *Jimi Ane*.

But there is another version of *Galo* myth on the creation of the universe and according to this, the *Jimi* is the creator of the universe including the *Hichi/Hisi* and *Medo*. Out of the union of the *Medo* and *Hisi*, all things and beings on earth and in the sky including the *Donyi* and *Polo* were born. And the sky was decorated with stars and clouds. The sun and the moon were created with super power to maintain peace and justice on earth. All other gods and goddesses were also created and sent to different places with different duties.

Nyori (1998) in “The Religious Belief and Practices of the Adis: A Study with Reference to the Galos” has asserted that, “in the popular pantheon, however, the name of *Donyi-Polo* (the sun-moon god) comes next to *Sedi* (a creator according to Padam-Minyongs) and *Jimi*, the creator. The creator becomes obscure and silent after the creation; so no sacrifice is offered to his/her name. On the other hand, the *Adis* give popular divine dignity to *Donyi* (the sun) and *Polo* (the moon), who is regarded as the symbol of the creator and the protector or saviour, who is always with us”.

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According to this version, *Jimi*, literally meaning silence is regarded as the creator but after completing the task of creation she remains silent. But *Donyi* and *Polo* remain with human being physically as well as spiritually. As such, people regard *Donyi-Polo* as the highest divine figure. In fact, *Galos* worship *Donyi* on several grounds. *Donyi* is the controller of the fate of human beings and giver of wife to *Tani*.*^12* *Donyi* also saved *Tani* by engaging *Jiku-Miku* (son of *Donyi*) to resurrected him when *Taki* murdered and devoured him. Thereafter, when *Tani* was revived, *Donyi* assured to bless him with sunshine, energy, favourable weather and animals for domestication etc.

According to Nyori (1998), in view of significant roles played by *Donyi*, she is known with different names and characters in different spheres of *Galo* society. In the *Nyibo-Agom* (poetic language of priest) the *Donyi* is called *Iji Ane* (mother *Iji*). She can manifest herself in different ways and all members of her kingdom help her in carrying out various activities in different fields. *Donyi Jiku-Karku* is said to have presided over the sessions in *Kargu-Kardi* (the kingdom of *Donyi*) and he takes decision on the fates of human beings and animals with the help of *Yirku* and *Siri-Molo*. *Chiko Jiku-Jite* keeps the records of the deeds of men and women and regulates the life and death of human beings. *Jiru* reigns over the kingdom of dead and controls the men of bad character. *Jilen-Jiba* and *Jinyo-Jinyak* look after the various other spheres of the universe. While performing rituals, *Galos* make some images and offer different sacrifices to *Donyi*. Together with these, there are a number of benevolent and malevolent deities under *Jimi* and *Donyi-Polo*. *Galos* believe that the same deity may act as both benevolent and malevolent but a
malevolent deity turns into benevolent one when it is properly propitiated and offered timely sacrifices. As per one of the myths, many of the uyus (spirits) are the descendants of Taki who was Tani’s cruel brother and who took away Tani’s Habro/Cheko (supernatural power) by deception. So Taki and his descendants have the supernatural power and they become spirits and can see human beings from anywhere but they cannot be seen by humans. All these different deities or uyus (spirits) are commanding different spheres of the earth such as Yule-Uyu is the guardian deity of the east, Yury-Uyu that of the west, Ahi or Kohi-Uyu of the north or upstream, and Mopin, Pinku-Pinte, Ampir, Pirlin-Ngurin, Chikojite, Nyiku, Jiku etc. for the south and the underworld. There are also deities of house, village, neighbouring forests, water and sky. House gods and goddesses are Agam, Hitum-Jore, Ite-Bote, Chute-Gamte, Bote-Bome, Igo-Gamgo, Doli-Doga, Chukur-Gamkur, Ikur-Bokur etc. while Yapom, Doje-Yapom, Pomte-Sarte, Bute-Kamdu, Karu-Kate and others are the gods and goddesses of the neighbouring forests. Biru-Biyek, Jeru-Poru, Lipe-Pompe, Kiru-Ramro etc. are the deities of water and Peka, Kate, Kale, Dote-Dori, Liru-Litum, Liru-Karu and many others are the sky gods.13

Myth of origin of Human

Like the myth of origin of universe, the Galo myth of origin of human does not have a commonly accepted version. In fact, different clans and clan groups of Galo tribe has different genealogical counting from Jimi up to Tani. Jimi, better known as Jimi Ane (mother Jimi) is regarded as the creator by the Galo. According to Nyori (1993), Jimi created Medo and Sichil/Sisi or Hichi/Hisì and from the union of Medo and Sisi started the human race. The first child was Sibuk whose son was Buksin, Buksin’s
son was Sintu; Sintu’s son was Turi and Turi’s son was Rini or Tani (Abo Tani), the father of human race. Rini (Tani) was born along with three other brothers namely Riki (Taki), Rinyo (Tanyo) and Rite (Hote).  Riki (Taki) became the evil spirit, Rinyo (Tanyo) became the tiger and left to stay in the jungles by promising Tani that he would kill wild animals for him when he came for hunting expedition in the jungle and also asked Tani not to divulge to anybody anything about him and his whereabouts. Rite (Hote) was always sitting idly at home but one day decided to leave home for forest like Rinyo and transformed himself into an elephant by using the chingi (pounding stick used with chipar) to make his momey (trunk), oop as his nyeru (ears), chipar to make his arpo (legs) and finally he used hampek (broom stick) for purpose of making his nyebu (tail). When his whole physical structure was thus changed, he left for forest and stayed there ever since. It is believed that Tani was left alone by his brothers, though Taki was there but he was an epitome of evil spirit and was adversary of Tani. Rini (Tani) might have been a spirit and not in complete human form. Many Tanis might have evolved or many generational stages of Tani might have passed before the Tani in complete human form evolved whom Galo considers as their ancestor. Thus, Tani’s evolution may be taken as different stages of evolution of life of the Galo people. Moreover, there is occurrence of Tani’s death twice; one by Rike (Taki) and another by Rinyo (Tanyo) who were his brothers. There is strong opinion among Galos that there might have been more than one Tani or Abo Tani. “Tani e niku gola nili goben na” (There might be old Tani and new Tani); the occasional remarks from the nyibos and nyikoks or village folklorists have been known. Indeed, from the myths or legends there are ample reasons to agree with this statement. According to myths or legends, Tani is believed
to have lived in the period when all living thing and non-living could communicate and understand one another. *Tani* had married *pekam* (a fish eating bird), *onyor* (a tree having thorny trunk), dry-wood, fire, *Diyi-Tami, Rosi Tami* the daughter of *Diro* (famine) and finally *Anyi Mumsi* (*Donyi Mumsi/Donyi Yayi*) the daughter of *Donyi*.

When the world faced the situation of serious drought because of the rising of two suns, he mobilized all the beings on the earth and managed to blind one of the eyes of a sun which became the moon. His constant conflict with *Taki, Taro* and the monkeys speaks of situations which are not of a normal human life. Thus, it was not the life of our immediate ancestor *Abo Tani*. Our ancestor *Abo Tani* might be the most recent *Tani* who started cultivation, organised *Mopin* festival and led a settled life. From this stage of *Tani*, all *Galo* clans seem to claim their genealogy.¹⁶

(Tani) etc. There are some differences or variations seen in these versions which are because of the fact that it has been orally transmitted from generation to generation. Besides, it was because of certain prevailing dialectal variations within the clans of Galo tribe. But it does not make any contradictions in the genealogical origin and history of the Galo since all clans consider and trace their origin from Jimi Ane (mother Jimi) and count their genealogy mainly from Rini (Abo Tani).

B. Myth Relating to Marriage

The origin and evolution of marriage system in Galo society can be traced back to a very interesting myth. According to Boya Potom, marriage system is said to have started with Abo Tani, the first man on earth. In fact, there are many stories relating to Abo Tani and his marriages which are still narrated among the Galo tribe as a whole. As such, it is generally believed that myth of origin of Galo marriage can be traced back to Abo Tani which is still being continued by his progeny. The myth of Tani’s marriage with Diyi Tami and Rosi Tami is written in details in the myth of origin of Mopin (pp. 157-158). As mentioned in it Tani’s marriage with Diyi Tami was supposed to have taken place before his other marriages. Because according to one of the versions of Mopin myth, Diyi Tami felt disgusted and returned to her mother’s place after Tani committed foolish acts frequently. He became so lonely and to satiate his loneliness married many living things which he thought well for company such as Onyor (a thorny and toxic tree), Pejek (bird), Tatik (frog), Oko or Kohuk (dry leaf), Kompe (grasshopper), Eme (fire) and Duri Yari or Rosi Tami daughter of Diro (p. 158).
In the marriage myth of *Abo Tani* or *Tani*, *Abo Tani* is known to had many wives among whom were the *onyor, oko, eme, kompe, pejek, tatik, Donyi Yayi*, daughter of *Donyi Ane* (mother *Donyi*), *Diyi Tami* (daughter of goddess *Mopin*) and the last one *Rosi Tami* (daughter of *Diro*, famine). Of course, the primary motive of having so many different wives by *Abo Tani* is well reflected in the *Ge Mama Ge, Galo* folk songs, which reveal that *Abo Tani* was desperately struggling to have a child who would be able to continue the human generation after his death. *Tani* for the first time married *onyor*. As his wife, she always used to prepare a dish of fish. *Tani* wondered but didn’t know how she managed fish for him every time. As his curiosity grew, one day, he followed her without her knowledge and found that she went to the stream and poisoned the fishes out there by urinating in the water. *Tani* didn’t like her method of catching fishes; therefore, he deserted her immediately. *Tani’s* second marriage was with *Pejek* (a bird). It was found that she always cooked delicious foods for him. *Tani* again wondered on her repeated delicious foods. One day it was discovered that she used to urinate over the cooking pot to make the food tasty. *Pejek* was very shameful when *Tani* noticed her action. Hence, she flew away without giving *Tani* any child. Then after sometime he married a *Tatik* (a frog). He found that *tatik* had a bad character as she had the habit of blunting the *eek* (a tool for weeding plants) always and demanded a new one. *Tani* could not provide a new *eek* every time she demanded. They quarreled and *tatik* jumped into a pond and never returned. It is believed that because of that incident, *tatik* is found in the pond. *Tatik* also could not give *Tani* any offspring. Thus, *Tani’s* search for wife continued and he married *Oko/ekkam* (a leaf) again. From their union, a child named *nipek* or *tapek* was born but that was a leech. Since *oko* could not feed her son, *Tani* made a
minor cut on his knee and let his first son suck his blood. He was not contented with tapek as suitable successor to rule the world after him.

_Tani_ continued his search for wife and again married _Kompe_ (a kind of grasshopper). From their conjugal life, _Kompe_ bore four sons – _Nisi, Nite, Niki_ and _Nibi_. But three of the four sons died under different circumstances. _Nisi_ was drowned, _Nite_ met an accident and _Niki_ died under uncontrollable dehydration and diarrhoea like condition. _Nibi_ was the only one alive among them but unfortunately he was a snake. _Galo_ believed that _Nibi_ is the ancestor of snakes. So names of the snakes found today are _Biki, Biram, Bite, Bimi_ etc. following the tradition of _Galo_ naming pattern.²³

_Tani_’s strive for wife perpetuated to such an extent that he married even _Eme_ (fire). Unfortunately, his private parts got burnt when he tried to have an intercourse with his wife _Eme_. Gradually, after some days the burnt portion began swelling and rotting as such it was not covered up properly. The stinking smell attracted the houseflies and they infected his wound. _Tani_ was enraged and decided to punish the flies. Thus, he took the flies as his captives but a hen came, killed and devoured the flies. _Tani_ at once caught hold of the hen and kept under his custody. Then, a dog came and killed his hen. As a punishment, the dog was made his captive. In this manner, the dog was killed by the goat, goat was killed by pig, pig was killed by cow and cow was killed by mithun (bos frontalis) one after another. _Tani_ made the mithun his captive and took it to a place called _Mogi-Moka_. A thunderstorm took place and the falling trees killed his mithun there. Having lost his mithun at _Mogi-
Moka, he cut a cane to recompense the loss of his mithun. He made a swing out of that cane. On the way, Tani met Donyi Jirpu-Jirlu (daughter of sun and moon) who challenged Tani that her elder sister named Donyi Yayi (Donyi Mumsi) would break his rope by swinging. The challenge was accepted and Donyi Yayi was asked to swing on his rope. As claimed she broke Tani’s rope while swinging, Tani took this as an opportunity to demand compensation for the loss of his swing and rejecting all other offers, his demanded her to marry him. Thus, she was compelled to marry Tani. Two daughters were born from Donyi Yayi – Niya and Nigum. After some years, Donyi Yayi also returned to her place leaving her two daughters with Tani. According to Marpak Chiram, ever since Mumsi came from the land of Donyi, she was not keeping good health. She became lean and thin day by day. Tani was worried. Mumsi told him to go to her parents. Tani went to Donyi and told them about the condition of Mumsi’s health. She appreciated and without saying anything gave him a cane basket with lid. He was told not to check inside but to deliver the basket to Mumsi. Accordingly, Tani went homewards carrying the basket on his back. On the way Tani heard somebody echoing his voice each time from inside the basket. He tried to reason out. But he could not. At last, he peeped into the basket to find a human inside. But he carried it to earth and placed it in the granary and informed Mumsi. Next day Mumsi went to the granary. Tani was eager to know as to what Mumsi was going to do with the man. He secretly followed her to the granary. To his utter surprise Mumsi was seen eating flesh of the man. Tani returned home. He kept it to himself for a pretty long time. Meanwhile, Mumsi’s health also improved. But one day they quarreled and Tani called her man-eater. Mumsi realized that Tani had seen her eating human flesh. She was greatly perturbed and felt
humiliated. So she also went back to her parents never to come back. Thus, once again Tani lived without wife.

Tani became very lonely and his health also deteriorated after her departure leading to his illness. He asked his daughters to meet Beno (a kind of bird), who was the renowned priest, for an omen test for his illness. Beno confirmed that Tani’s illness was owing to loneliness and the desire for a wife. But the daughters could not reveal the reason of illness to their father told by Beno. But one day, Tani came to know the reason from the whispering of his two daughters. After the passage of many days, Tani started to develop affairs with his own daughters as there were no other alternatives. Out of their union, two sons Nidum and Ningum were born and from them the present population of Galos have originated.

In addition to this, another myth related to marriage is found among the Galo tribe which is popularly known as Anyi Kari-Karnya or Karpu-Karlu. In fact, the myth of Anyi Kari-Karnya or Karpu-Karlu is recalled through recitation of kaben better known as kaben kabnam during marriage ceremony in Galo society till today.24

According to this myth, once there lived a brother and a sister. The name of the brother was Kara-Karba and that of the sister was Kari-Karnya or Karpu-Karlu.25 When they have attained their youthful stage, it became necessary for the sister to get married. But it happened that she started protesting her brother on the issue of her marriage and leaving the parental home. The brother advised his sister to accept the marriage proposal from a boy and get married to stay with her husband for the
rest of her lives since a girl is destined to get marry and leave her parental home. But sister rejected the idea of marriage made by the brother and claimed that their brothers should rather marry and leave their family and village. Many suggestions have been put forth by the brother but the sister could not be persuaded to accept the idea of the marriage. As such, a decision was taken for a test by which the brother and sister have to prove as to who would marry and leave the home. It was decided that the fishing equipment of the sister would be used by the brother and all hunting equipment of the brother would be used by the sister to prove whether sister can take the place of the brother. The sister taking all the equipment of hunting such as Ir- ipuk (bow and arrow), Hotam (armour), Rokshi (sword) and Rache (rucksack/haversack used by male) went to jungle for hunting purpose. On her way, she could not find any animals rather she encountered prawns and crabs that usually exist in swampy uplands. On the other hand, brother went for fishing at rivers taking all equipment of the sister for catching fishes like Raju and Igin but he also encountered many animals like bear, deer and boar etc. Thus, both the brother and sister returned home empty-handed. Next day, they changed their equipment; the brother went for hunting and sister for fishing which was the normal case. The brother brought many animals out of his hunting expedition and similarly sister also brought a lot of fishes, prawns and crabs etc. Hence, it was concluded that sister is destined to get marry and leave their parental home for her future life and stay with rest of the members of her spouse and do the household chores. On the contrary, brother too would marry but stay back in the parental home to take care of his family, manage food and ensure security for all members of the family.
After a few days, there came some gentlemen with marriage proposal to Anyi Kari-Karnya. But unfortunately, despite coming to know the fact she has to leave her family one day or the other Anyi Kari-Karnya was not willing to leave her home and village saying that she has been born and brought up in that village and she has an inalienable sense of belongingness and attachment with her home and native village. Her brother and many others gave her different suggestions on various topics relating to conjugal life, natural phenomena and other aspects of natural events and advised her that just as Hottum (bear), Hor (wild boar) and Hodum-Hocher (deer) etc. changed their habitats with changing seasons, just as Ngoch (a kind of fish) migrated from one location to another in the river with change of seasons and Ngoru (a cold water fish) moved from rivers to upland areas and fields located nearby during rainy season, in the same manner, she has to accept the natural process of life and should get married and stay with her husband for rest of their lives and carry forward the future generations of the husband’s family. All persistent efforts on the part of the Achi Kara-Karba in persuading Anyi Kari-Karnya for marriage did not yield fruitful outcome as she was rather reluctant to leave her home and village. At last, she was told that pegi peya\textsuperscript{26} are also in bridal dress, fly high in groups to meet their grooms in the next village. Hearing this, Anyi Kari-Karnya immediately got up to see the pegi peya in bridal dress flying in the sky. Immediately taking the opportunity, the elderly women dressed her up in bridal dress then and there. Anyi Kari-Karnya deeply sobbed over her foolishness.

It is believed that the custom of marriage system has been established among the Galo as a result of the incident of Anyi Kari-Karnya which mandated that the sons
would stay with their parents while daughters have to leave their parents and
parental home permanently after their marriage and stay with their respective
husband. On the day of her marriage, she would be decorated in complete bridal
dress known as *Bum-Raar* and all other ornaments, beads and precious stones due
to her from her parents and move to her husband’s home.

There is one more myth related to marriage but it is specifically about the origin of
togu marriage. *Togu panam* as a kind of marriage ceremony was first introduced by
*Ijo Kago* society. According to this myth, *Ijo Yaame* (a young boy) of *Ijo Kago*
society, found himself fit to start a marital life. So he started to search for a suitable
bride from the place of *Donyi Polo Momen* (the world of *Donyi Polo*). He wanted to
make the marriage proposal in every doorstep out there but he was not given the
permission to place such proposal in *Donyi Polo Momen* because he belongs to high
class society. *Ijo kago* and *Ite bote* were major clans and called *nyite* (rich) while
other gods and goddesses belonged to *nyima* (poor) groups. Thus, they despised
each other and had no cordial relationship. In view this predicament, all people of
*nyite* group advised *Ijo Yaame* to search for bride in *Dinyi Loma* who were another
rich group living in the plains.

*Ijo Yaame* requested *Togu* (a high class society) to offer him a bride from their
society since they belong to the same high class society such as *Luye-Ijo Kago*,
*Lute-Togu* and *Lupin-Pinku-Pinte*. *Togu* society accepted him to become their son-
in-law but there was no girl in their society to become his bride. As there was no
alternative, they sent a priest to *Dinyi Loma* and performed a ritual ceremony called
oma garnam to gain a girl child for *Ijo Yaame*. Through the supernatural power of *ijik*, mother *Dinyi Loma* became pregnant and gave birth to girl child who was named *Digo Yade*. With the passage of time, she grew up and became a beautiful young lady. The desire of *Ijo Yaame* for a bride was thus fulfilled. When she attained marriageable age, marriage of *Digo Yade* with *Ijo Yaame* was to be carried out but she did not have clothes to wear during marriage ceremony. This saddened *Dinyi Loma* because she cannot give away her daughter to *Ijo Yaame* without her having any clothe on her body. When it was known to *Ijo Yaame*, he gave seeds of *heego-heegar* (cotton tree) to *Dinyi Loma* and *Digo Yade* and asked them to cultivate it in a *rikche* (a small cultivating land) and prepare clothes. Accordingly cotton was cultivated and harvested by them and cotton thread was prepared in *koro-korek* (spinning yarn). *Digo Yade* and her mother made *jese kore* (A special kind of open skirt known as *Gale* worn by *Galo* women) and marriage of *Ijo Kago Yame* and *Digo Yade* was performed successfully. Thus, *togi panam* evolved and it was named ‘*Togu*’ because *Digo Yade*, the bride belonged to *Togu* society which was also one of the high class societies of the time like that of *Ijo Kago* society.

It is believed that *Abo Tani* and *Takar-Taji* also performed *Togu panam* afterwards. Some rituals and practices of *Galo* marriage (*togi*) have evolved from the *Togu panam* performed by *Ijo Kago* society like *namja koba*, *ujuk tapu*, *nyida parik nam* and *kaben kabnam* etc. During *Togu*, *Ijoo Kago Yaame* danced wearing *luptu* (cane hut) on which *hepa hebu* (hornbill beak) and *balli* (red tail of *yak*) are fixed. They beat brass plates carried in their left hands with the stem of wild plants in their right hands to welcome the bride’s group.
Similarly the bride has to climb up the house of the bridegroom only through a separate ladder called *namya koba* in her bridal dress. This *namya koba* is erected especially and exclusively for the bride when she first arrives thereafter it is removed and she used the common ladder of the female folks known as *nyime koba*. It so happened that when first *Togu* was performed *Digo Yade* while climbing up the ladder felt uneasy as she was under monthly menstruation. Finding her ashamed and uneasy, an *imik* was prepared for her comfort and rest but still *Digo Yade* could not recover from her uneasiness. As a result, *ijo yaame* group started playing *ujuk tapu* (flute) in order to make *Digo Yade* forget her uneasiness. In this way use of *ujuk tapu* was started by *Ijo Yaame* group in *Togu*. When *Digo Yade* entered the house of *Ijo Yaame*, a woman sang *kaben* (traditional marriage song describing the past and future life that is to be spent by a girl). *Kaben kabne* (woman who sing *kaben*) narrated all types of experiences *Digo Yade* had to face as a bride. She blessed her to spend a happy and prosperous life and have enough courage to face any kind of odds in life.29

**Different ritual practices of marriage**

It is found that there are many ritual practices which have evolved from marriage myths described above. These have been well embedded in the practices and beliefs of the *Galo* and continue to be followed till today. These are outlined below:

*Tagag Nam (proposal) and Tahie Nam (engagement)*

Having obtained a positive indication from *pip chikanam or ro kokkanam* the next and the third important step of *Galo* marriage system is the arrival of lampo/boy’s
parents with *tagag nam* to the residence of the girl’s parents. The *lampol*/boy’s parents along with one or two village elders proceeds ahead with *opo apey* (basket of local rice beer), *adin* or *ngoi papey* (packet of meat or fish) and *jera* (a cloth). If these items are accepted by the *daane* (the bride’s side), *opo* and *adin* are prepared and consumed together at that night and the proposal of marriage is also considered to be accepted. But before accepting these items, the parents take the opinion of the girl also. The groom’s side before leaving in the next morning hangs a *jera* at the *nyode* of the girl’s house or it is simply handed over to the bride’s mother. This is popularly known as *jera chircha nam*.

Here the *Pugo Galo* slightly differs because the next step taken by the *daapo* after the proposal has been accepted by the *daane* is *Yoksi-Talo Gejinam*. According to this custom, a *yoksi/roksi* (traditional sword) and a *talo* (traditional brass bowl) are offered to the girl’s family. Having received a positive response from the *daane*, the *lampol* of the *daapo* carries a *yoksi* and a *talo* with him and goes to the bride’s home to finally settle the type of marriage that is planned by the boy’s family. This *yoksi-talo gejinam* is also known as *koba partum*, where *koba* means the ‘ladder’ and *partum* means ‘to block’ implying that the entrance of that girl’s house is forever blocked for any other suitor. Although no physical object is fixed in the ladder to block it. It may be deemed as a kind of intimation to the society at large that the girl has been betrothed with someone. Moreover, if it is known that *yoksi* and *talo* have been accepted then from that day no one would seek her hand and that girl is socially recognized as the bride of the boy. In fact, *yoksi-talo* plays the same role that the ring plays in a ring ceremony.
After the acceptance of the marriage proposal in the *tagag nam*, lampo(s) again proceeds with *dokum* consisting of forty or sixty or eighty or hundred pieces of meat packed in a *papey* (a bamboo basket) and *jera* (a cloth) for the mother of the bride popularly known as *ane eji*. A *jera* specifically known as *jebin* is given to the mother which is the more valuable and costlier than the other *jeshi* (a *jera*) given to other members if required. The meat can be either of pig or cow or mithun. No fish is used for *tahi nam*. Another essential element is *mentem dotak* which can be a live mithun or a live cow or a dressed pig which is carried along and given to the bride’s parent. Next morning, the bride’s parents perform a *roksin kika nam* specifically known as *ome kika* i.e. a sacrifice of a pig and divination of the liver to ascertain the feasibility of their daughter’s marriage. With positive sign in the liver divination, *yabur ame jinam* is carried out which means distribution of *ame* (different brass plates) to the groom’s *lampo* as well as to other accompanied members of the groom’s party for the success of marriage in the coming days.

*Nyida Nunam*

*Nyida nunam* is a marriage dance performed in the groom’s house for 6-8 nights before or after the performance of any major activities of the *togu*. All young and adult males and even unmarried girls are also allowed to participate in the *nyida nunam*. They stand in a line holding one another’s hands and move anticlockwise. Expert narrators sing *dello* (folk song sung only in *nyida nunam*) and narrate the origin of *togu*, the migration of ancestors, genealogies of different clans of the village, etc. *Nyida nunam* is also performed by groups of male or female members separately. In recent years, especially in urban centers, this dance is performed during
Mopin celebrations (Plate No. 5.1). Village elders and children throng to witness and enjoy the dance performed during night.

Nyida nunam is first performed in the evening after the heema tagnam but in some places it is performed before going to the jungle to collect yato-yak logs. Next occasion for nyida nunam comes after the performance of a ritual called as yuumey. In the night after yuumey, experts again sing on different themes of togu panam, on migration of different clans of the village and the names of ancestors especially renowned and brave ones are recalled and eulogized in their songs. The last occasion for nyida nunam comes before the adult males and elders go to the forest to collect hogi and lob (four full length bamboos kept intersecting on the roof) materials and in the evening after collecting all the required materials stated above.34

Yuumey/Jete Panam

Yuumey panam or jete panam is considered as the second largest rituals of togu which is performed below the granary. The nyibo along with bo chants hymns and sacrifice of pig, fowls etc. are done for the images of yuumey. These sacrificed items commonly known as yidum are given to the bride’s parents in the form of regma, diro and opo by a team from daapo lead by lampo. But if the sacrificed pig is a small one, then a bigger pig is killed and carried along with the yidum to bride’s parents. This visit assumes significance in the wake of the forthcoming mithun sacrifice. As such, bride’s relatives and elders are also invited and thorough discussions are carried out primarily focusing on the exact date of mithun sacrifice, total number of mithuns intended to be sacrificed at the togu by the groom’s family,
the number of mithuns the bride’s parents wish to eat, and the number of people to whom gifts are to be presented etc.\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{Cimpo Donam}

An interesting aspect of \textit{yuumey panam} is \textit{cimpo donam}. Ten or five fowls collected from the relatives of the bride’s family of the village are donated to the \textit{daapo} party but these fowls are offered as wild birds caught in the \textit{uju-goro} (trap to catch birds). Similarly, if pork is provided then it is offered as meat of \textit{hos-hoki} (wild animals). All these fowls or pork whichever is provided are consumed by the groom’s party before they return to their village. This practice of \textit{cimpo donam} is also done by the \textit{daane} party when they come to the village of \textit{daapo} for \textit{togu panam}. Thus, it is reciprocal in nature.\textsuperscript{36}

\textit{Nyanyum Achin Donam}

The bride is given cooked rice and meat to eat and \textit{poka} to drink just before she crosses the village. This is known as \textit{nyanyum achin donam}. It is a combination of cooked rice and meat packed in \textit{oko/ekkam} (leaf) and the \textit{poka} is stored in \textit{chugri} (Dried gourd used as container of \textit{poka}). The chicken sacrificed for \textit{chitum jore/hitum jore} during the performance of \textit{kesup panam} is used in it. Before the bride eats her \textit{nyanyum achin}, the selected place is sprinkled with rice paste and a brass plate is put over it. This brass plate is used so that the bride is protected from the evil eyes of the worms and other creatures living in the earth. Before taking the food, she throws away two handful of rice over her right and left shoulders to pacify
the evil spirit so that they may not follow the bride. After that she eats handful of rice in even number of time which means she has to eat two handfuls or four handfuls and so on. The significance of taking even number of times is that both the bride and the groom would remain paired.\textsuperscript{37} In this context, the much-famed tale of \textit{Topo Gonne} may be mentioned here. It is believed that \textit{Topo Gonne} on her way to groom’s home was repeatedly advised to take her \textit{nyanyum achin} but she denied saying that those places were the graves of dog, cow, pig and mithun etc. At last, she agreed to eat her \textit{nyanyum achin} on the \textit{eli-leene} (a big stone) but unfortunately she was swallowed by that \textit{leene} and converted into stone.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Nyida Parik Nam}

\textit{Nyida parik nam} is performance of dance by group of boys and youths of the village to welcome the bride and her \textit{daane} party on the way. Indeed, it is the most fascinating and entertaining aspects of \textit{togu panam}. Basically there are two types of \textit{nyida parik} which are \textit{enchi terik nam} and \textit{ame denrik nam}. \textit{Enchi terik nam} is performed by children of the groom’s village. They hide themselves and wait in the wayside bushes taking the branches of \textit{enchi} tree. Suddenly they rushed out when the \textit{nyida} arrives and obstruct their way with dance and shouting. After some minutes, they run forward and allow the \textit{nyida} party to move ahead. Again after sometime, they make their presence felt with the same dance at a different place.

Another dance is \textit{ame denrik nam} performed by the group of adult males. Unlike children of \textit{enchi terik nam}, these adult performers of \textit{ame denrik nam} put on certain attires meant exclusively for that dance. They wear a long sleeveless black
traditional coat and use *luptu* (cane hat) which is fixed with a beak of hornbill in the front and tail of yak dyed in red colour is fastened at the back of the hat. The white feathers of hen are again fixed at the tip of the beak using *yirken*. They dance beating the brass plates carried in their left hands with the stem of wild plants in their right hands. With every beat they yelled a sound like the sound produced by the hornbill when they fly in group. In sync with the sound, they stoop forward their heads and sway left and right. Slowly their movement progresses with slight leap and the first in the line moves to the centre surrounded by the rest and he dances facing all others one by one. Thus, all dancers one after another moves to the centre and repeat the same steps. Having finished all the steps, this group also run forward and repeats their dance there.\(^{39}\)

**Namya Koba Chanam**

A new and special ladder with a gate is erected exclusively for the bride who will use it to climb the house of the groom. Since this ladder is exclusively made for the bride, so no other person is allowed to use it. When the construction of this ladder is finished, the priest chants and sacrifices a chick. The head of this chick is kept on the gate with its beak open. In fact, he chants to the effect that all bad elements that have accompanied the bride from her parental village and from parents’ house be left behind the gate. Thus, the gate is meant for purification of the bride because she enters the house completely as a new member of the family. On this occasion, female *nyikok* performs *kaben* to welcome the bride to her new house. *Iti* (pulverised or pasted rice) is showered on the bride and all other members of the bride’s party when they climb the house of the groom.\(^{40}\)
**Ujuk Tapu Minnam**

*Ujuk Tapu Minnam* evolved out of the first *togu panam*. When Digo Yadee was climbing up the *namya koba* she felt uncomfortable as she was under monthly course. Finding her feeling ashamed and uneasy, an *imik* (fire place) was prepared for her resting but she could not recover from uneasiness, so *Ijo Yaame* group started dancing and playing *ujuk tapu* (flute) in order to make *Digo Yadee* forget her uneasiness. In this way, use of *ujuk tapu* was started by *Ijo Yaame* clan during *togu* ceremony but today *ujuk tapu* is hardly played and it has only remained as a historical incident. ⁴¹

**Hob Panam**

The *togi* is the highest order of marriage ceremony, especially of rich people in which the ritual of mithun sacrifíc (*togi panam*) is a matter of pride. The number of mithuns to be sacrificed depends upon the capacity of the household and prediction of the *Nyibu*. The mithuns are displayed near (*hogi*), the ritual structure before sacrifice (Plate Nos. 5.2A and 5.2B). Everyone gathers around the *hogi* to witness the scene of mithun sacrifice. The mithuns are sacrificed by the brother(s) of the bride. If a person cannot sacrifice all the mithuns single-handed then it is shared among the other brothers. Before sacrifice, the priest on his part chants and hand over the mithun to the *togi* deity. Simultaneously, the groom’s mother or any expert woman sings *kaben* to console and inform the mithuns that they have been reared like sons and daughters but today, they have been destined to leave this world since they are born for this purpose only. Thus, she wishes them safe and peaceful journey.
to the other world. It is followed by *kampu hinnam* by the bride and the *upuk abnam* (shooting of arrow) by the groom. Immediately after the shooting of an arrow by the groom, the mithun is hacked to death with an axe by the brother of the bride. When the mithun falls down on the ground, the bride puts a *kampu* on the mouth of the mithun(s) and one of the elders chop off the *aro-rotup* (tip of tongue) and keeps it in the *doi-ginsi* of the bride.

During the night both parties gathers for *ebak lanam*. The tongues of the mithuns collected are put to tests to find out the success of conjugal life and longevity of the groom and bride and for the future achievements and longevity of groom’s brothers etc. For instance, taking the name of the bride and groom, the priest put one tongue in the fire, if it burns without any movement and sound then it is a good omen and future prosperity and conjugal bliss can be ascertained. On the contrary, if it slightly moves or produces sounds then bad omen is indicated and conjugal life may be jeopardised.42

C. Myth of Origin of Mopin

According to one of the narratives, *Jimi* is the creator of universe and all living beings, visible, invisible, human, evil spirits, tutelaries, animals, plants etc.43 Similarly, the origin of goddess *Mopin* is also from the same fountainhead of *Jimi* or the concourse of *Chite-Dote* (heaven and earth) that took place at *Chibu-Dogu* (last horizon of earth and sky). Genealogically, it is interpreted as *Jimi-Mipir-Pirto-Todi-Dimo-Mopin* which implies that *Jimi* begets *Mipir*, *Mipir* begets *Pirto*, *Pirto* begets *Todi*, *Todi* begets *Dimo*, *Dimo* begets *Mopin*.44 From *Chibu-Dogu*, all living beings
including goddess Mopin migrated to Loku-Lote (the first sojourn place of all creatures) there Mopin took training for ten years and nine months from Gute-Gamro (the trainer). Basically in the training, all skills of Dogin Runam (migration) were taught. Many trainees failed to complete their course but Mopin faithfully accomplished that and therefore, Mopin was anointed as the Goddess of corn, affluence, prosperity etc. from that time onwards. After receiving the status of goddess, Mopin migrated to Digo Yamo (the world of Mopin).^45

According to myth, there was a time when all living creatures could speak and understand each other. During those days, Abo Tani was the only creature in human form. The Mopin festival originates from an incident of Abo Tani’s life. One day, Abo Tani was walking in the river valley and met Tode-Rene (a small bird) who informed him that Takar-Taji (terrestrial beings living separately) are going to perform a Dorri-Panam, a big wedding ceremony sacrificing ten mithuns at a time. All living beings including Abo Tani were invited to the grand function. “As the first natural being of earth these mithuns belong to me. How come Takar-Taji kill my animals”, Abo Tani soliloquized. Thus, he went to the area of Takar-Taji on the pretext of attending the Togu Panam (mithun sacrifice). In the sacrificial ceremony, Kojak – a small rabbit and Pase-Rodo – a small rat were appointed as nyibo and bo respectively. But in the course of their chanting, both used abusive words against each other and refused to perform the duties of priest and follower. Since Abo Tani was the only being who could be a substitute, he was requested to act as nyibo. He agreed to act as priest on the condition that all the images of Murdom, Ponyo, Isi-Puksi and Monyi-Tage; Papum-pasak, Gui-pasak, Gui-gamyo of the ceremony i.e.
Takar-Taji’s Rindu-Kundu (different ritualistic images of marriage ceremony) preparation should be done by his mother. In fact, Abo Tani had a hidden motive to take all the ten mithuns fastened by Takar-Taji for sacrifice. According to Abo Tani’s suggestion, Takar-Taji deputed Kekopai (squirrel) to invite Abo Tani’s mother. Actually, Abo Tani did not have his mother as she was already dead. He erected an image and kept it covered with cloth on a rock half merged in a river. He cautioned Kekopai that his mother is deaf and dumb and it is only with murte kome (a bamboo stick) which is kept nearby that can be used to awaken his mother. So she needs to be pushed with the murte kome to get her response. Kekopai went there and did as directed by Abo Tani but alas! The image of his mother fell down in deep water and was drowned. Kekopai returned back terror-stricken and narrated the unfortunate incident to Abo Tani. Abo Tani knew that it was his trick but he showed much anger against Kekopai and appeared to be grief-stricken. He threatened to destroy the whole world in anger. Abo Tani blamed Takar-Taji and claimed all ten mithuns as a compensation for his mother’s death. Somehow Abo Tani could be consoled with the offer of nine mithuns by Takar-Taji and thus only one mithun was left which will be sacrificed for the marriage. As already stated, Takar-Taji had invited a large number of guests but he had only one mithun left to be sacrificed now. The marriage ceremony was organized as the greatest feast but one mithun was not sufficient. For the sake of prestige, he had to sacrifice Pase Dorngo Rodo Dorngo – five each of two types of small yellowish rats. Despite that, meat was not sufficient for all the invitees, so the guests were offered various other things. Komchi (a grasshopper) as a host was assigned with the duty of preparing Dumpo but finding it insufficient, he added his own head too. Again Hoji (a wild lizard)
while preparing an item from the heart of the mithun, tore out his heart and added it in view of inadequacy. So Komchi seems to be headless now and Hoji seems to lack heart as it wander about on the way in the jungle unmindful of the people around. All because of their sacrifices made for Takar-Taji during the togu ceremony. Among others, Koche (a squirrel) and Pem (a kite) were offered a packet of salt but they were quarreling over its distribution as none wanted to became the distributor. Helpless and finding no way out, Pem pick up the salt and flew up the topmost branch of a Yabi (tree) without sharing the salt with Koche. As a result, it is said that Koche is always found to climb up Yabi tree and eat its bark.47

Both Dumpu (Deer) and Kipu (Dog) were served Agya Posum (fermented soya beans) and Lote Posum (a bundle of bones). Dumpu jokingly told Kipu that he seemed to be frowned and Kipu replied that Dumpu has a very bony cheek. Thus, both of them too quarreled with each other. Disgusted Dumpu destroyed Agya Posum and kicked up Lote Posum and ran away. Being enraged, Kipu chased Dumpu followed by Abo Tani. Dumpu requested for safety and shelter to Kune lamne (a kind of tree) but in vain. In their run and chase, they crossed into Digo Pine (Ampir Dolu) – the domain of Mopin Moji and disturbed the natives who were performing rituals. On charges of encroachment in their rituals, both Abo Tani and his dog Kipu were taken captives and imprisoned but Dumpu was picked up and protected. Having stayed for some days in the prison, Abo Tani thought to escape and return home. So he played a trick for his release. He killed a rat and inserted it in his armpit. When the rat decomposed it started stinking. He called Mopin Ane and told her that he is not well and might die any time. He said –
Hearing this, Mopin Ane also realized that Abo Tani might die soon and she could not morally bear the risk of his death. Moreover, all beings of Digo Yamo were frightened to hear these words from Abo Tani and agreed that Abo Tani was really giving foul smell. So out of sympathy and to save the life of Abo Tani, Mopin ordered Diyì Tami to release Abo Tani and Kipu. He got up and stressed his body and observed that Digo Yamo, the world of Mopin has full of prosperity with abundant food and wealth. He earnestly approached Mopin and begged her to give him something to be taken to his own world since he has endured a lot in Mopin’s captivity. Mopin gave Tani some seeds of maize which he puts in the ears of his Kipu. He returned to earth and unknowingly sowed the seeds in a barren place called Abin Bindu and Poko Loto. But wild birds ate up all the precious seeds. Tani again went to the world of Mopin and told the detail of what had happened with the seeds. Having heard that, Mopin gifted him Digo Ge Higmen, a knife and instructed him to select a patch of land and clean the jungle and loosen the soil and then put the seeds underneath. Tani did as instructed by Mopin but again this time cultivation process was disturbed by an animal called Kada Ramyo. Tani rushed back to Mopin for further instructions and advice. Back to earth, as per the guidance of Mopin, Tani constructed a Komdu Pora (trap) to catch Kada Ramyo (animal) whose skin could
be used and exchanged for *Gitum Yokpak* (implements for cultivation) from *Nyiro Poro Komar* (dealer of implements). Thus, well-equipped with implements, *Tani* started to clear the jungle for cultivation.

Unfortunately, *Yapom-Yaji* appeared before him. They dissuaded him from clearing the jungle. *Tani* made a strong contention but they could not be persuaded. Disappointed, he again reached the land of *Mopin* and told her all about the interference from *Yapom-Yaji*. *Mopin* met *Yapom-Yaji* and requested them to share a plot of land to *Tani*. But they disagreed, so finding no other options to convince, *Mopin* decided to play a trick on them. She asked *Yapom-Yaji* and *Tani* to cut down the trees in a portion of the forest and when the trees dried up, fire will be burn. All the three will be asked to stand in the midst of the burning forest and the one who can resist and survive from the raging fire will be declared the master and owner of the whole forest and the earth itself henceforth. Further, it was also informed that *Diyi Tami* would be allowed to set the fire. In the meantime, *Mopin* secretly instructed *Tani* to dig a pit in advance and hide beneath the pit when the fire catches. On the appointed day, all three gathered in the middle of the selected part of forest and *Diyi Tami* set the fire. Dried leaves and woods of the forest were immediately engulfed by the massive flames and *Yapom-Yaji* could not resist the raging fire and thus fled away. But *Tani* meticulously did as instructed by *Mopin* and when the fire was over, he emerged out of the pit and stood firm in the encircling smoke in the middle of the forest. *Mopin* declared *Tani* as the master and owner of the earth. *Yapom-Yaji* accepted their defeat. Thus, *Tani* was freed from all hindrances. He sowed *Mili-Amli* (paddy). *Yapom-Yaji* and other deities requested *Tani* to honour
Mopin with the celebration of ritual. Under the guidance of Diyi Tami and Pinku-Pinte, Tani prepared the image of Mopin. Mopin gave ample seeds to Tani which facilitate the start of regular cultivation on earth.49

After some months, Tani went to meet Mopin but this time he has different purpose in his mind. He solemnly informed Mopin that he intends to tie a nuptial knot with Diyi Tami who was the daughter of Mopin. Mopin inquired Diyi Tami and she too consented to marry Tani. So Mopin also agreed the proposal of Tani in the best interest of her daughter. In this way, Tani’s marriage with Diyi Tami was solemnized which was attended by Mopin and many other deities. Mopin, the presiding deity of wealth and prosperity presented some agricultural implements, seeds and other precious stones as a token of love to the couple. Diyi Tami was also bestowed with a singular power to prepare a pot full of rice from one grain. Besides these, she was gifted with Doke-Doak, Yari-Yapor or Doi-Ginsi. Thus, Tani and Diyi Tami began their conjugal life in complete peace and happiness on earth. They did not bother to cultivate and produce food stuffs but made use of the power of Diyi Tami who continued to get the rice from one grain to feed the entire family. They were rather contented in that way.

But after some months, Tani married Rosi Tami who was the daughter of Diro (famine). Diyi Tami was shaken and was not willing to share her as a co-wife because she was the daughter of Diro, the famine. So, one day Diyi Tami went back to Digo Pene her ancestral world. During her absence, Rosi Tami had to prepare rice but she did not know the method of Diyi Tami of using only one grain at a time. She
put two grains which produced huge quantity of rice and that could not be consumed by both Tani and her. Without knowing what to do with the extra rice and being afraid of Diyi Tami, she fed Dire-Kibo (hungry dog). Diyi Tami did not return till then and again Rosi Tami had to prepare food, she again put two grains but it did not produce huge quantity but remained two grains only, because the famine had consumed the magical power also along with the leftover food. Since that day, the famine broke out and Tani had to face a terrible situation. In spite of his efforts, he could not overcome it. The news of Tani’s misery reached Digo Pene and Tani’s wife Diyi Tami also came to know that. But she had decided not to return to Tani’s house. However, on repeated appeal for return to his house, Diyi Tami expressed her willingness to return but on one condition that Rosi Tami should leave Tani forever and she should be thrown into the river and Dire-kibo should also be killed. After that Tani should pray to Mopin and other deities who would again provide him with agricultural implements and seeds. On knowing the wishes of Diyi Tami, Tani planned to kill Rosi Tami and she was drowned in the river and Dire-kibo was cut into pieces and thrown into the water-fall. In this task, he was assisted by Litum and Liro (Gods of war). Having completed all his tasks as wanted by Diyi Tami, Tani made images of Mopin and other gods and goddesses. He was guided by Diyi Tami in the making of images like Losi-Lore, Lodo-Lore, Rilum-Tajum and Gare-Gapo (dress). Tani worshipped these images and invoked Mopin and other deities who came to Tani’s place and brought Diyi Tami along with them. They restored all agricultural implements and seeds but did not gift the magical power of preparing large quantity of food from one single grain. But through the favour of Mopin, Tani
got some powers to cultivate large areas. He was directed to remember and celebrate *Mopin* every year in future. *Tani* worked hard and prospered thereafter.\textsuperscript{50}

As a result, since the days of *Abo Tani*, *Galo* people, being his descendants, make the images of *Ane Mopin*, *Anyi Pinku-Pinte* etc. and invoke them to arrive on the occasion of *Mopin* celebration and bestow blessings for bumper harvest and all-round prosperity of domestic animals and all human beings (Plate Nos. 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5).

Regarding *Tani’s* marriage with *Diyi Tami* and the start of cultivation by *Tani*, there is another version\textsuperscript{51} with different plot structure from the earlier version. When *Tani* was pretending to be seriously ill and about to die while under the captive of *Mopin* in *Digo-Yamo*, *Mopin* convened a meeting with other deities of *Digo-Yamo* for the prevailing condition of *Tani* and they decided to release *Tani* and his *Kipu* with ponderous compensation. As an indemnity, *Mopin’s* daughter *Diyi Tami*’s hand was given to *Tani* for his conjugal life and *Mopin* accepted *Tani* as her son-in-law. The newly married bride *Diyi Tami* requested her mother to provide her corn for agriculture and implements as gift known as *rili-bongo*. These seeds were carried in pouches of *Kipu’s* ears and *Mopin* directed *Tani* not to halt at *Pako-Tai* and *Pache Rodhe’s* (squirrel and rat) village. *Tani* forgot to obey the instruction of *Mopin* and halted at *Pako-Tai* and *Pache Rodhe’s* village and thus all their seeds were eaten up by them. *Tani* went back to *Mopin* and begged for seeds. Again, *Mopin* presented seeds but on reaching *Tani Momen* (earth), he failed to cultivate as the seeds were sowed in *Poko-Lote* (barren place) so the seeds were eaten up by birds. For such
frequent foolish acts of Tani, Diyi Tami felt disgusted and returned to her mother’s place. Tani became lonely and he wanted to satiate his loneliness and married many living things which he thought well for company such as Onyor (a thorny and toxic tree), Pejek (bird), Tatik (frog), Oko or Kohuk (dry leaf), Kompe (grasshopper), Eme (fire) and Duri Yari or Rosi Tami daughter of Diro, and the entry of Rosi Tami in the life of Tani was believed to be the beginning of famine on earth. She did not know the mode of canny and put two grains instead of one that augmented surplus quantity of rice which was excess for both of them. Out of fear, she commands Diro-Kibo to eat up all left over food. That careless attitude on the part of Rosi Tami ruined the blessing that Tani had received from goddess Mopin through Diyi Tami. Thereafter, Tani went to Mopin again and made fervent supplication for the return of Diyi Tami with him again. By knowing his pitiful condition, Diyi Tami also agreed to unite with him again but on the conditions that Rosi Tami should be dismissed from his life and Diro-Kibo should be annihilated. Tani consented to her demands and with the help of Litum-Liro executed Rosi Tami and Diro-Kibo. After the execution of Rosi Tami and Diro-Kibo, mother Mopin handed over Diyi Tami to Tani for the second time and maneuvered him to clear the plot where he lost the seeds and set the fire. Accordingly, Tani came back to his Tani Momen and wanted to clear the same plot where he lost his seeds but Yapom-Yaje (deities of forest) impeded him from the cultivation. Tani was confused and he returned to Mopin and narrated to her all about the interference of Yapom-Yaje. On hearing that, Mopin advice Tani to cut down some trees and when it dried up, set the fire and Yapom-Yaji and Tani should stand in the middle of the burning fire. The one who can resist and survive from the fire shall be the master of the forest and earth. Yapom-Yaje also endorsed the
boldness of Tani. Meanwhile, Mopin secretly instructed Tani to dig a pit in advance and slip into it when fire catches. Accordingly, it was done and when the fire was ignited Yapom-Yaje could not resist the fire and fled into deep forest. But Tani came out of the pit when the fire was over and stood firm amidst smokes as if he had really resisted the blazing fire. Yapom-Yaje accepted their defeat. Tani was declared as the master of the forest and earth. Thereafter, Tani started the cultivation of crops and vegetables with the help of Diyi Tami’s guidance and began to prosper with bumper cropping. Mopin assured to continue to shower blessings on Tani with wealth, health and prosperity in days to come but in return she advised Tani to commemorate this event and invoke and greet her with symbolical materials especially enchi. So in remembrance and honor of Mopin goddess, Galos being the descendants of Tani celebrate Mopin festival every year and beg rili-bongo (boons) for surplus crops, good health and prosperity of all human kind.52

D. Myth of Origin of Death

Death is a phenomenon that can never be known or predicted. It is the last crisis every individual must meet. It is the end of life, or the crossing from the physical world to the spiritual world. Galos believes that in the beginning of human existence there was no death on earth and it is believed that death was not a part of the original order of creation as planned by Jimi. It is known to have come to man for his disobedience to the divine order, his greediness, wrong deeds, impatience, carelessness etc. which is similar to that of Christian genesis where disobedience to the divine order by Adam and Eve brought miseries and death to the human lives on
There are a few different accounts of Galo myths of the origin of death. In the first account, Nyori in his History and Culture of the Adis has written:

It is said that once there was a great storm. Next morning Abo Tani went out to see how things were damaged by the storm. As he moved about, he heard a plaintive note, sad but sweet. He went the direction it came from and found that it was a Lingo-Tango (a bird) weeping for her children. He was deeply enchanted by the music and asked the bird to share him a part of her music. She said that it was pleasant to the ear alright, but sore to the heart, because it was the burden of sorrow of a bereaved mother. “Do not ask for it because you will get the sorrow with the song”. But Abo Tani insisted that he should be shared with the music and prayed for it. At last, she yielded and gave him drops of tear and advised him not to smear that on his children and others. But Tani went home and swallowed the tear when his mother Risi Rijom was changing her skin just as snake cast off its slough. She was in great pain and as soon as Tani swallowed the drops of tear his mother died. It was the first death among men and that is how death came to men.53

The second account is through an interview with Moba Doye. It is said that once there lived Teri-Ane, a beautiful damsel. All creatures on earth admired her beauty and her attractive physique. Among them was an evil spirit known as Opo Tako (a small wild animal) who was extremely captivated by the beauty of Teri-Ane and he started to develop a strong passion towards her physical beauty but could not express his feelings to her. Finding no alternative to materialize his desire, one day
he used his magical power and transformed himself into a Tai-Tama (housefly). After assuming the shape of a housefly, somehow he secretly raped the virgin Teri-Ane who could not have any knowledge of her seduction at all as it was a tiny housefly. But after a passage of some months, Teri-Ane started conceiving and that was becoming prominent day by day and month by month. All living beings around were surprised to see the changing physical stature and more precisely the increasing size of her stomach. There were lot of discussions and gossips on the emerging situation of Teri-Ane as she seemed to be conceiving without marrying anyone but she was completely ignorant of their rumours. All living beings living in different parts of the world were inquired but nobody agreed that they had any sexual relation or had sex with Teri-Ane. Different rituals were performed by many nyibos to ascertain the cause and different health experts were consulted but no one could tell the reason or cause of the growing size of her stomach. Eventually, a dog was asked to check the stomach of Teri-Ane as it might be a Nyibum-Tarum (contraction of muscles in the womb after a woman gives birth). It was a common practice among the Galo women to allow the dog to put his hand on Nyibum-Tarum because that used to cure such contraction of muscles of a woman. But dog also could not cure that and informed that Teri-Ane did not possess any kind of Nyibum-Tarum in her stomach but hinted that it might be case of pregnancy. Thus, he advised Teri-Ane and others to wait till the completion of nine months because if Teri-Ane is really pregnant, she will deliver her child and the child will surely resemble the father. Thus, it was concluded that whomever the child resembles will be the father and therefore, identifying the person responsible for the pregnancy of Teri-Ane will not be a difficult task. Hence, it was decided that Tapen (bat, a nocturnal bird) will
inform all regarding the father of the child since Tapen can fly fast anywhere on earth. Thereafter, everyone departed to their own place of habitation to wait till the end of nine months. As predicted, with the end of nine months, Teri-Ane gave birth to a girl child and it resembled Opo Tako. Tapen carried out his entrusted work and flew everywhere and informed all that Opo Tako is the person who had seduced Teri-Ane and he is father of the child. Opo Tako also accepted and confessed that he is person responsible for pregnancy of Teri-Ane. But Opo Tako unmindful of his misdeed, cleared jungles and destroyed many Kolu-Kodum plants etc. and all these acts had deep impact on Teri-Ane. She could not feed her child with her milk because it dried with the dried plants of Kolu-Kodum (wild variety banana tree) plants etc which Opo Tako had destroyed. As a result, their new born baby died soon after birth as there was nothing to feed her for survival. With her death, everyone was grief-stricken but nobody was willing to share a portion of their land for the burial. At last finding no alternatives, it was decided that since Teri-Ane herself is very big and huge, the child should be buried on one of her thighs and that was done accordingly. But unfortunately, after a few months Teri-Ane’s thigh started to decay and rot on account of the burial on it. She begged help from all but nobody turned up to extend support and rescue her because they had already been blamed for her pregnancy. Only Yaduk-Yak (tree), Rib-Tapo (fish) and other small variety of creatures who have not been blamed for her pregnancy, extended their help to rescue her but all in vain. With the passage of time, the wound on her thigh spread all over her body leading to her untimely death. During that night when she breathed her last, continuous thunder and storms occurred all around the earth that led to floods, landslides etc. and almost ravaged the whole earth. As a result, many birds, animals
met their death and innumerable trees of the forests were destroyed. Having experienced the fury of nature during the whole night, Abo Tani was searching for dead animals and birds early next morning. He looked all around in the forest and heard a tune of a bird which attracted his attention. He walked towards that birds and found that it was a Lingo-Tango/Choblu-Kabu (a bird) who was crying for the loss of her children on that stormy night. Abo Tani could not stop himself and requested the bird to share his plaintive note with him so that it could be used for various purposes like Yaane, Nyitom-Doyi (wisdom and tales) during Nyin-Nyida, Pirne-Togu, Dig-Berj etc. (marriage and other grand ceremonies) in his lifetime. Lingo-Tango replied that it was not a melodious tune which she is singing rather it is a melancholic note that is forced to come out from her mouth because of loss of all children during the stormy night. Further, she told Tani that he would inherit her sadness if he shared her tune and she might also be blamed for misfortunes that befall him and his family in future. But Tani insisted and even threatened to kill her with his arrows if she does not part him some of her tune. Having insisted by Tani, Lingo-Tango haplessly asked Tani to pluck a leaf of Nejir-Popir (A kind of small tree) which he did accordingly and she spit on that with certain precondition to be obeyed by Tani. She advised Tani to smear that spit only on the trunk of tree when it does not tremble. And most importantly that spit should not be smeared on his children and parents. Tani decided to do as suggested by Lingo-Tango and in return of his gift, he also advised Lingo-Tango to stay away at the topmost branches of trees so that his arrow may not touch and kill her during his hunting. Tani was very careful of the gift he had received from Lingo-Tango and kept that in a very safe custody. But one day, it happened that Tani unknowingly smeared that on his
mother and as a result, his mother died within a short time. Tani was quite remorseful and now he remembers the words of Lingo-Tango. Meanwhile, he was confused as he had no idea of death at all because that was the first death that occurred with human beings. He just buried the corpse of his mother taking the help of Tai-Pakopalo, Taga and Tai-Tama. But on the fifth night, Tani found that his mother came back home as if in a dream. He asked her the reason of her return and she told him that he had not performed the funeral rites in a proper and required manner. Besides that, he had not arranged Doga-Onam (provision of food and poka) for her and some of her belongings have not deposited or kept at her burial place. So she advised Tani to carry out all the formalities required for the dead at funeral in future. Having told all necessary formalities as well as information with regard to a dead person, Tani’s mother returned to her grave. Tani performed all formalities of the funeral rite as suggested by her mother. Thereafter her mother never returned again. In this way, death had occurred and started with all human beings which had been inherited indirectly from Teri-Ane that subsequently lead to death of Lingo-Tango’s children and thereafter with that of Tani’s mother.54

According to the third account given by Marpak Chiram, immediately after the separation of the earth and the sky, two suns appeared one after the other in the sky. There was no night. There was day-light throughout and it was extremely hot. Because of the scorching heat of the sun, the water and herbs began to dry. Waters receded behind the mountain rocks. All living beings man, animals and spirits suffered. Everybody had a dry and sore throat except Ajum-Bagi, the rat. He had very shrill voice. It surprised everyone. Later, it was discovered that he had been
drinking water from behind the rock by entering through the crevices of rock. All beings came together to find ways to tackle the situation. It was decided to break the rock wall. They struck the rock with axe and spade, but all were blunted. There was no sign of breaking. Finally, Debo-Kombo (god of water) shot an arrow on the face of the rock. It broke and water gushed out. Then all creatures assembled and decided to destroy one of the suns. They were not fully successful in their mission. Only one eye of a Donyi (sun) was blinded. It is believed that the Donyi whose one eye was blinded became the Polo (moon).

Now problem took a new dimension. The Donyi got angry and would not rise. Darkness engulfed the whole universe. Existence became almost impossible on the earth. A meeting of all beings was again convened and all unanimously resolved to persuade the Donyi to rise again. They sent many emissaries and agents to console as well as convince Donyi but none could convince her. At last, the Tapen and the Apo-Jirjo (a little bird with beautiful long-forked tail) were assigned the job. They went to Donyi. They danced to their best and made fun around the Donyi. Tapen displayed various styles of acrobatics. Donyi could not remain indifferent anymore. She smiled at the works of Tapen. She began to respond to them and was convinced to rise. She put a condition that she would eat Kiya, the daughter of Taki before she rose. But Tapen played a mischief; he informed Tani that Donyi wanted Niya, the daughter of Tani. Hearing that Tani was down in the mouth but he had to accept the condition in the interest of all and had to sacrifice his daughter. Donyi ate Niya, without knowing the fact that she was the daughter of Tani. Later on, she realized that Niya was Tani’s daughter whom she had eaten. She was very remorseful for the
gross mistake. Thus, *Donyi* sent a massage to *Tani* that he should not express his sadness in presence of others. Further, *Tani* should not shed tears when she rose lest bad luck should befall upon him and his progeny. The culprit was the *Tapen* who was exclusively liable for the whole predicament. He was afraid that *Donyi* had known his mischief and would punish him. So in order to escape punishment, he went into a dark cave when the *Donyi* rose and hid himself till it set in the horizon.

In the morning when *Donyi* rose with red hallow in the east, *Tani* could not resist himself from his grief. He remembered his beloved daughter *Niya*. Thus, he started weeping at the sight of *Donyi*. At this *Donyi* got annoyed because he felt that *Tani* had disobeyed his instruction and forewarn. Out of anger, she decreed that death be there whenever she rose. A man dies whenever *Donyi* rises in the morning. Hence, *Galos* believe that because of the disobedience of their forefather *Tani*, death came to humanity and exist with human beings till today.55

**Ritual practices evolved from myth of death**

**Funeral Rite**

As already mentioned in the preceding page, the customary procedure for disposal of the dead body has evolved from the myth relating to the death of *Abo Tani’s* mother. The myth provides directions for the last rite that is still in practice in *Galo* society. Customarily, when a person dies his/her cloths are changed. *Iti* is smeared on the face of the deceased person and kept at the *nyode*. Ashes of the hearth is taken and sprinkled around the corpse. The *opo* is brewed and *poka* is kept in a brass bowl near the corpse for consumption by the soul before the corpse is taken to the grave for burial. It is known as *kodu-kolu dulik jinam* or *kodu-kolu mojinam*. [168]
Thereafter, an expert sings *hen-nyilen* (dirge) to console the soul of the dead and urged it not to repent, revisit and create problems by his/her *uyi-orom lanam*\(^6\) (tormenting the living family members and relatives by the evil side of the soul). Further, he/she is also appealed to leave his/her family members and this world. *Hima genam* (carrying dead body to the grave) is entirely arranged by the family members. No one turns up to carry the corpse and it is single-handedly carried by the person of the deceased’s family. That is the reason the legs of the person are folded over the chest in order to shorten the body using bamboo ropes which is then wrapped with the *tako upp* (a carpet made from wild plant). Generally, if the deceased one is the father or mother then the eldest son perform the funeral rite. If there is no one to carry the corpse then someone is entrusted with the responsibility and he is compensated with a *barko* (valuable traditional brass object) but there is no fixed rate of compensation because there are instances where even a mithun is also offered as compensation by the wealthy people. One of the sides of bier is folded so that the corpse does not slide down when it is carried by a person on his back. The corpse is carried out only through the back door and taken down from the house only through a separate and newly built ladder made of bamboo. This separate ladder is made exclusively for the corpse to be taken down. The existing old ladder is also used but it is removed with a new ladder after five nights. No one is allowed to go ahead of the corpse except the person who carried a *mero* (a bundle of burning firewood).\(^7\)

Since there is no concept of common cemetery or graveyard among the *Galo*, the grave was excavated at the fringes of the village or in and around bamboo grove or
at a place chosen by the family members or wished by the deceased before death. In fact, the site is chosen very carefully to ensure that no boulders or rocks are found inside which might obstruct the required digging because a site once selected and dug cannot be changed afterwards at all cost.

Before the digging starts, it is obligatory on the part of the hima gena (person who carried the corpse) to start the first digging for the two separate chambers of the grave. Such practice is known as diig-mercho nam. The method of digging the grave is different in the sense that it is two rectangular ditches dug in east–west direction which resembles the shape of “L”. Its dimension is according to the measurement of the corpse but it normally ranges from three or four feet in length and depth to two feet in width. The digging works and construction of the grave is generally done by three-four village experts.

When it is finished, a mahen (a long cane used for burying of corpse) is used whose one end is fixed inside the grave and other end is kept outside. All personal belongings of the deceased such as cloths, carpets etc. are wrapped together, carried along with the dead body and put inside the grave. Other left over items of the deceased are set alight at a separate and nearby place of the grave. Before putting the corpse inside the grave, the bamboo ropes which are used to fasten the corpse with mat are untied and the mat is taken out. The body entirely covered with clothes is placed inside the second chamber of the grave and the cloths covering the face are removed and the head is made to point towards the west. An egg is thrown away after touching the face with it and another egg is kept on the right hand after one of
the nails of the right hand is cut and thrown outside. Both the hands are attached and placed against the mouth. The legs are also folded. Thus, the shape of corpse is made to resemble the shape of a newly born baby. Wooden sticks and bamboos are put over the grave and banana leaves are placed on them which are carefully tied. All those working inside the grave comes out through a bamboo ladder. Thereafter, the mahen whose other end is put inside the grave is pulled out with a chant by priest to call back the souls of those persons who dug the grave. Slowly, soil dug out from the grave is thrown over the banana leaves and the two chambers of the grave are completely sealed which is then stamped tight by two or three persons with their legs. Some stone slabs are placed above the grave and vertical sticks are fixed at both ends of the grave which are again fixed with two horizontal sticks using cane ropes. These sticks are used to hang some of those articles which are used daily by the deceased during his lifetime. A shed is made using taek or taar (wild leaves) over the grave, fenced properly with split bamboos and ropes. A bow and arrow are transfixed over the sticks and points towards the sky which is believed to prevent the spirit from descending down and disturb the deceased. A dog is killed and dragged to encircle the grave which is thrown away afterwards with a belief that it barks on the way and thereby clear the way for safe and peaceful journey of the deceased. Besides, to pacify different spirits, a mithun or a pig etc. is offered and sacrificed in the name of departed soul depending on the financial ability and the status of the family. It is also believed that with the sacrifice of animal, its soul goes to the master.
The construction of the *nyibu* (grave) varies from person to person. If a person is a *nyibo* then a separate small cage like structure made of bamboo shavings is attached on the top and a live cock is kept there. It is believed that if the cock survived up to five nights then one of the males of the family inherits his spiritual power and become a *nyibo*. On the other hand, if the cock died before five nights then nobody inherits his spiritual power and there will be no priest from the family. Similarly, if the dead person is a *nyijik* (*nyibo*) or *nyikok* then *digo-deik* is done and his grave is sprinkled with *iti* (rice paste). A *perngo* (construction of five-stage separate chamber for keeping live cock) is also arranged for *nyijik* (*nyibo*). Likewise, if the dead person performed *dig-berj* and *perne-togu* (big marriage ceremonies involving sacrificing mithuns) then *losi-loar* and *lute* (different designs of bamboo shavings) are made and depicted in the grave. Again, if the person is a *nyigam* (a renowned hunter) then a *rogme* (feathers of fowls) is fastened on the top of the grave. Thus, a dead person’s qualities and achievements are clearly depicted in the grave.

Having buried the dead, those who actively worked at the burial ground go to a nearby river to take bath or wash themselves before return to their home because death is regarded as baleful, all who come in contact with it may be infected thereby. Barring the clan members, the house of the deceased is prohibited from entry for a few days, in some places it lasted for five days. The entry of *dune* and *magbo* (daughter and son-in-law) is strictly forbidden till the completion of *udu-nyope* (a ritual in which one-two sets of split bamboo known as *nyope* is removed from the floor of the house where dead body was laid and new sets are placed) and *peder-hoko* (a religious ritual performed to purify the house). *Hima Gene* prepares food for
the soul of the dead for five nights consecutively which is known as *Doga-Onam*. For five nights, he provides two meals in the morning and evening and burn a fire near the grave in every evening. The food is prepared in two small bamboo tubes using upper joint stem – one for rice and another for meat. Only four grains of rice are put into the tube with water which is then steamed. Similarly, two small pieces of meat are packed in dark green side of *oko/ekkam* (tender leaf) which are put into a tube and steamed. The *Galo* used lower jointed stem of bamboo and light green side of *oko/ekkam* for human beings whereas upper joint stem of bamboo and dark green side of *oko/ekkam* are used for *uyus* (spirits). These steamed bamboo tubes are kept or hung inside the grave. Sometimes, only rice is prepared in the upper joint stem of bamboo but boiled meats are tied in a small dark green side of *oko/ekkam* and kept together in the grave. After five nights, visits to the grave, provision of meals and burning of fire near the graves are entirely stopped. Thereafter, the grave is neither visited by any member of the family and relatives nor it is cleaned or repaired. As such, no death anniversary or any kind of celebration used to be done to honor the dead. Not only these, even his/her name is not taken or mentioned unnecessarily for fear of enraging the soul. If his/her name needs to be mention, it should be prefixed with a word ‘*urom*’ meaning spirit.59

**Taboos observed by Hima Gene**

There are taboos meant to be followed exclusively by *hima gene* (one who performs the last rite). He is forbidden to take foods with the rest of the family members and from the same utensils of the family. His meals are separately steamed in lower joint stems of bamboo for five nights. His foods can also be cooked in separate utensils
but these have to be thrown away after five nights. Some food items like tapioca, yam, ginger, sweet potato and any other planted fruits and vegetables are avoided but *onyor* which is strictly prohibited after the performance of any religious ceremonies is allowed for consumption. Meats of *Bibbo-Benbo* (wild animals), beef and *Pirik* (wild bird) are strictly avoided. The movement and inter-mingling with other fellows is strictly forbidden for five nights. Even after five nights, he needs to avoid eating ginger and also attending any social and religious functions for one year where *Iti-Take* (rice powder/paste and ginger) are used such as *Pirne-Togu* (marriage ceremony), *Mopin-Moji* (festivals) etc. A ritual known as *Udu-Nyope* is performed after five nights. During this ritual, one-two sets of split bamboo known as *nyope* is removed from the floor of the house where dead body was laid and new sets are placed. Again, the *koba* if the existing old ladder was used for carrying down the dead body is also removed and replaced with a new one. Since the *Galo* house is constructed with a raised platform, a two-three sticks of burning firewood is used to heat the floor of the house from the below which is again washed with boiled water. The priest performed a *Peder-Hoko* (a religious ritual) and chants to purify the house. A *Layap* (purification ritual) is also done exclusively for those who dug the grave and feathers of a hen are also attached to their hair for purification of souls. With the performance of this ritual, most of the taboos observed by *hima gene* are lifted.60

**Notes and References:**


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Abo Tani disobeyed Ane Donyi’s (mother sun) messages sent through a messenger who informed that Abo Tani should not express his sadness in the open and shed tears for the loss of his daughter when Donyi rose in the morning lest bad luck should befall upon him and his progeny. Donyi was annoyed because Abo Tani did not obey her instruction. She ordained that all human beings would meet death in their lives from then onwards. Thus, because of the disobedience of Abo Tani, death came to humanity and people dies when sun rises every morning.


7. In view of controversy over the ownership of land between Tani and Yapom-Yaji (evil spirits), Mopin planned out a strategy to resolve the issue. She asked Yapom-Yaji and Tani to cut down trees in the forest and when it dried up, it will be set ablaze. Yapom-Yaji and Tani (all contenders) will stand in the midst of the burning forest and the one who can resist and survive from the raging fire will be declared the master and owner of the land henceforth. But Tani emerged victorious with the help of Ane Mopin. He was declared the master and owner of the earth. Yapom-Yaji accepted the defeat.


12. Ane Donyi as a giver of wife offered her daughter Donyi Mumsi as a wife for Tani.

14. *Rini (Tani), Riki (Taki), Rinyo (Tanyo)* and *Rite (Hote)* were four brothers from same parents but they took different shapes and parted their ways for different existences.

15. Marpak Chiram, interviewed by Eli Doye, 4 April, 2015.


18. Ibid, p. 87.


22. *Donyi Mumsi* is differently called as *Donyi-Yayi* by the *Lodu-Karka* section of *Galo*.

23. The naming pattern of *Galo* is different and unique in the sense that the last syllable of father’s name is prefixed to the first syllable of the son’s or daughter’s name. So names of son or daughter begin with the last syllable of the father.


25. For *Lare* and *Pugo* sections of *Galo*, it is *Anyi Kari-Karnya* while it is *Anyi Karpu-Karlu* for the *Lodu-Karka* section of *Galo*.

26. *Pigi Peya* is a kind of migratory bird which flies in the sky making a U-shaped diagram.

27. The bridal dress of the bride is known as *bum-raar* which includes some valuable local ornaments such as *Churgin, Tahi-Tadok, Tekom-Nyar, Dumbo, Raj-Bele* etc.


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32. Some Galos within *Lare* and *Lodu-Karkas* do not have *tahi nam* as a part or stage in their marriage system.


35. Humo Ropo, interviewed by Eli Doye, 03 Jan 2015.


42. Tomo Doye, interviewed by Eli Doye, 15 Jan 2015.


44. Boya Potom, interviewed by Eli Doye, 10 February, 2015.

45. *Digo Yamo* is the prosperous fairyland of *Ane Mopin* and daughters – *Pinku, Pinte & Diyi Tami* etc. where Abo Tani was kept under the captive for many days but subsequently released and blessed with corns and agricultural implements etc.
46. *Dumpo* literally means head. Here preparation of *dumpo* refers to a special item prepared from the head of sacrificed mithun.


52. Ibid, 19.


55. Marpak Chiram, interviewed by Eli Doye, 4 April, 2015.

56. *Uyi-orom lanam* is a belief among the *Galos* that soul of dead torment the living family members and relatives if funeral rite is not performed properly or some belongings of the dead are not put in the grave. It is also believed that the loved ones are generally attack by the *uyi*.

57. Boya Potom, interviewed by Eli Doye, 10 February 2015.


60. Ibid.